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THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

March 13, 2012

Testimony of Joelen J. Gates

S.B. 395 - An Act Increasing the Personal Needs Allowance for Certain Long-Term Care Facility Residents

H. B. 5480 - An Act Concerning Increasing Home and Community-Based Care for Elderly Medicaid Recipients

Recommended Action: Support

Good afternoon, my name is Joelen Gates and I am an attorney with Connecticut Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) in Willimantic. CLS represents low-income people with disabilities and elderly people who live in nursing homes and in community-based programs. I'm here today to support **S.B. 395 – An Act Increasing the Personal Needs Allowance for Certain Long –Term Care Facility Residents** and **H. B. 5480, An Act Concerning Increasing Home and Community-Based Care for Elderly Medicaid Recipients**.

S. B. 395 - Legal Services supports the proposed increase in the amount of money a nursing home resident gets to keep for personal use from \$60.00 to \$69.00 per month. This is the money a resident gets to spend for personal needs such clothing, TV, telephone, haircuts, shampoo, body lotion, newspaper, internet, greeting cards, postage, birthday gifts, etc. – anything not covered by the nursing home or Medicaid for personal care.

Nursing home residents used to be able to keep \$69.00 per month until last year when the legislature reduced the amount from \$69.00 to \$60.00. At that time, the legislature also eliminated the annual cost of living increase. While the state clearly wanted everyone to “share the pain” in balancing the state budget, nursing home residents gave up

13% of their income in this effort. Nine dollars means a lot to a resident who has to choose sometimes between having a TV or a telephone, getting a haircut or new clothes when theirs gets lost in the nursing home laundry.

We urge you to restore the nursing home residents' personal needs allowance to \$69.00.

H.B 5480 – Legal Services supports the efforts of the state to expand and simplify the eligibility criteria for home and community based waiver programs through Section 1915(i) of the Social Security Act. We would like to see a more comprehensive type waiver with services available to people of all ages based on the person's particular needs, rather than the individual waivers, the state currently has, with eligibility criteria based on age or particular disability. A universal waiver with a single point of entry would be easier for Connecticut residents to access and it would be a more equitable system to people of all ages with needs for community-based services.